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What Shall I Read?

BY

A. CAPEL SHAW,

CHIEF LIBRARIAN;

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF,
AND ON THE LINES SUGGESTED BY

COUNCILLOR GEORGE SPERRYN,

CHAIRMAN OF THE FREE LIBRARIES COMMITTEE.

BIRMINGHAM:
1909.

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WHAT SHALL I READ?

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The words which I have used as the title of this pamphlet may be regarded as in some way indicating its scope and purpose. It is intended to furnish one answer out of many that could be given to such an inquiry, an inquiry which it is thought many borrowers at the Lending Libraries often put either to themselves or others.

To guard against misapprehension it may be as well to state that this pamphlet is not intended primarily for students. As a rule, they know what books they want, or, if they do not, they have teachers and professors to guide them in their choice. While, however, it is not intended for them, it is believed that it contains nothing which might not be of service in some part of their course.

Students proper, however, form but a comparatively small part of the readers who make use of the books in the Lending Libraries. There are many who, without laying claim to be students, are none the less desirous of becoming acquainted with the treasures contained in the Libraries. Their interest is aroused by articles in the daily and weekly papers, by conversation with their fellows, and by the Lectures which are delivered in connection with the Birmingham Free Libraries, and they would like to obtain fuller information on the various subjects which interest them, but do not know exactly how to go to work to obtain such information.

To many readers of this class the printed catalogue is a sealed book. They look down the list of books under any one particular heading, but have no means of knowing which book out of the many there, it is desirable for them to select. They are bewildered by the number of entries, and it is to be feared often end by taking nothing out of that section at all, from the sheer impossibility of deciding which they had better choose.

It is in the interests of readers such as these that this pamphlet is written. It does not pretend to be an exhaustive list, still less does it pretend to be a list of "best books."

It simply points out certain books in the various classes which are good books, and which anyone who is interested in the subjects with which they deal will be the better for reading. It is hoped and expected that those who read these will be interested enough to induce them to take out other books in the catalogue on the same subjects.

With these few preliminary remarks I will now pass on to mention some of the books which may be named as furnishing an answer to the inquiry, " What shall I read? "

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.

Let me assume that the intending reader is interested in History.

There can be no doubt that everyone should take an intelligent interest in History, especially in the history of his own country.

History is the story of the nation, just as biography is the story of the individual. It traces the growth of the nation from its earliest beginnings until the present day, and enables us to understand how it has come to be what we now find it. It reveals to us the forces which have been at work in the making of the nation, the obstacles it has overcome, the causes which have operated to make it grow in any given direction rather than in some other. It must therefore be regarded as one of the most useful as well as one of the most interesting subjects.

When a nation has existed, as in our own case, for nearly 2,000 years, it is quite obvious that it will be impossible to unfold its story in full detail in one work.

All that such a work can accomplish will be a more or less brief outline of the general story. It is, however, desirable that the readers for whom this pamphlet is intended should start with a General History, and so obtain, as it were, a bird's eye view of the whole history.

Fortunately, there are two or three books which will enable them to do this. One of the most valuable and important of these is **Green's Short History of the English People.** This work, as its name implies, is more a history of the people themselves than of English Kings and English Conquests. It shows how the people

have developed from the valiant but half-savage Saxon Invaders who conquered the country by force of sword, into the highly-civilised and cultured people of to-day.

Another general history of considerable value is "**The Student's Hume,**" an abridgment and revision of **David Hume's History of England.**

The special feature of this work is the prominence given in it to the rise and progress of the Constitution. Several very important constitutional documents such as "The Petition of Rights" and the "Bill of Rights" are printed in it at length.

A serviceable and valuable work is **Gardiner's Student's History of England,** which outlines the history of the country from the earliest times to the year 1885.

Dr. Osmund Airy's Text Book of English History is a valuable compendium which gives a survey of the history of our country from the earliest times, and will well repay the reader. The book has the additional interest for Birmingham readers that Dr. Airy was for several years H.M. Inspector of Schools in the Birmingham district, and also a member of the Free Libraries Committee.

The introductory chapter of **Macaulay's History** also gives in a most interesting form a brief summary of the history of the country down to the time of James II.

These books are suitable for both juvenile and adult readers, but quite young readers of history are recommended to begin with **Collier's History of the British Empire,** a brief but very interesting summary of the chief events of our national life.

Readers who have made themselves familiar with any or all of the works mentioned will probably wish to find fuller and more detailed accounts of some of the periods mentioned.

Fortunately, there are several books which will help them in this respect. For the history of the country before the coming of the Saxons the following books will be found useful: **Roman Britain, by Rev. H. M. Scarth;** and **Celtic Britain, by Professor John Rhys.**

The history of our more immediate forefathers, the Angles and the Saxons, is set forth in **Freeman's Old English History,** a very interesting and valuable work, and also in **Green's Making of England.**

Dr. Freeman has also made the **Norman Conquest** a special subject of study, and his work on that period is of great value. Another most interesting work by Dr. Freeman is **The English People in Their Three Homes.**

On the Stuart period the reader is recommended to read **Gardiner's First Two Stuarts, Airy's Restoration and Louis XIV.,** and that most popular of all histories, **Macaulay's History of England, James II. to William III.**

Lord Macaulay set himself to write a history which should vie with the popular novels of the day in general interest, and, although he did not live to complete his work, he did accomplish to some extent what he attempted by producing a history of never-failing interest.

Another work, viz., **Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, by Carlyle,** not only gives a vivid portrait of the great Protector himself, but incidentally throws much light on the history of the time.

Another work of great interest and value is **Seeley's Expansion of England,** which, more than any other book of equal compass, enables the reader to perceive how England expanded from the British Isles to the world-wide Empire she now possesses.

The more recent history of England may be pleasantly followed in **J. McCarthy's "Modern England"** and his **"History of Our Own Times,"** while **Molesworth's England from 1830 to 1874** is a valuable work and one which will repay careful perusal.

In addition to the works mentioned there are two important series, **Epochs of Modern History** and **The Story of the Nations,** containing several volumes dealing with special periods, which will be of great service to the readers of English History.

The constitution of England is described with a wealth of detail in **Hallam's Constitutional History of England. Creasy's English Constitution,** and **Freeman's English Constitution,** while not so comprehensive as Hallam, are very interesting and valuable works.

For Political History the reader cannot do better than take that quite recent and most valuable work, **The Political History of England, edited by the Rev. William Hunt.**

This work is in 12 volumes, and covers the history from the earliest times to the year 1901, each volume being written by a different author and one who is specially capable of dealing with the period he has chosen. The reader may thus depend on having the latest results of historical research set forth in the most adequate manner.

Before leaving the subject of history altogether, I should like to call attention to certain other works, which, although not history

properly so called, are of great value from an historical point of view. I refer to those books which are called Historical Novels.

For example, **Kingsley's Hereward the Wake** gives a very admirable picture of the condition of things in England immediately before the Norman Conquest.

Ivanhoe, by Walter Scott, sets before us the state of the country in the reign of Richard the Lion-Hearted, and depicts the confusion and trouble caused by his absence from the Kingdom on Crusading Expeditions.

A very admirable picture of the Crusades themselves is given in **Scott's Talisman,** a book which gives us an inner view of those romantic episodes, better in some respects than works more specially devoted to the subject.

Westward Ho! by Kingsley, introduces us to the nautical life of England in the time of Elizabeth, and **Kenilworth, by Scott,** shows the social life in the reign of the same famous Queen. This book, moreover, has a special interest for Midland readers, as the chief events are described as taking place at Kenilworth Castle.

In **Scott's Woodstock,** another Midland novel, we have a portrait of the great Protector and the fugitive Prince who afterwards became Charles II.

In **The Fortunes of Nigel, by Scott,** we have the adventures of a young Scotsman who came to London, from which we learn much about the Court of James I.; and in **Peveril of the Peak,** by the same author, we have an admirable picture not only of life in the Midlands, but also in the Isle of Man and in the Court of Charles II.

Barnaby Rudge, by Dickens, is not only an interesting story in itself, but it also gives us a vivid description of the events which led up to and culminated in the "No Popery Riots." It shows the great danger of exciting the passion of the people even with the best intentions, and is full of lessons of warning which might well be taken to heart by those at the present day who talk glibly of rousing the people against the constituted authorities, and urge them on to obtain by violence what they deem to be their rights.

Those who on reading this book realise what terrible evils resulted from arousing the people to violence, even in what the leader regarded as a holy cause, will hesitate to urge on their fellow men the desirability of adopting the same course to-day.

There are other books of the kind which might be mentioned,

but these will be sufficient for my purpose here, and readers of all ages will find them both interesting and valuable.

There are many other books of history which the reader would find it an advantage to study, but it is impossible to mention all, nor can I in this pamphlet give any space to the histories of foreign nations, but will only say that a clear and comprehensive view of the progress of man cannot be obtained without some knowledge of the history of other nations besides our own, and that the reader who has mastered the books to which I have referred will do well to turn his attention to the histories of the nations who have made their home on the Continent of Europe. Especially should he read the histories of the Greeks and the Romans, the two great peoples who have had such a mighty and abiding influence on all who have succeeded them.

History, however, is not the only subject to which I wish to direct attention, and I propose now, therefore, to say a few words about Biography.

Here I will repeat what I have already said, that Biography is the story of the individual just as History is the story of the nation.

I do not intend to compare the relative importance of Biography and History, but this may be said, that, as we ourselves are all individuals, the story of a fellow man often comes more home to our hearts than the story of the nation, the collective units of which do not stand out so clearly before us as the individual does.

It is a little more difficult to select a few books to recommend in Biography than in the case of History, not because there are fewer books to choose from, but because there are so many.

The life story of almost every great man who has ever existed has been written by some one or other, and any accurate and well-written life will enable you to trace the great man's progress from his youth upward, through toil, disappointment, and oftentimes repeated failure, till at last his indomitable will proved triumphant, and he stands before us the great and successful man, who has done so much for the good of his fellow men.

Your choice of a biography to read will depend very much upon the kind of life in which you are most interested.

If you are a politician you will probably like the stories of the great statesmen who have from time to time held the reins of power and guided the nation along that path which has led her to the lofty position she now holds.

In this connection I may mention **The English Statesmen**

Series, which contains short monographs by well-known writers on Chatham, Oliver Cromwell, Henry II., Henry VII., Peel, Pitt, Walpole, William the Conqueror, William III., and Cardinal Wolsey.

All these handbooks are well worth reading, and form a good introduction to larger works, where such exist.

The following are also important and valuable works:—**Picton's Life of Cromwell, Morley's Life of Cobden, Smith's Life of John Bright, Forster's Life of Hampden, Morley's Life of Gladstone, Hitchman's Life of Lord Beaconsfield, Joseph Chamberlain the Man and the Statesman, by Marris,** and **The Letters of Queen Victoria.**

Those who are fired with martial zeal will naturally turn to the lives of the great warriors both on land and sea who have fought and bled and died for England.

Here I would recommend **Campbell's Lives of the British Admirals,** in which the great deeds of our chief naval heroes are depicted; **Gleig's British Military Commanders, Coxe's Life of Marlborough,** the great Duke whose military genius was of the highest order; **Gleig's Life of Wellington,** famous through all time as the Conqueror of Napoleon at Waterloo; **Forty-one Years in India, by Lord Roberts,** and **Lowe's Life of Lord Wolseley.**

The **Great Artists** and **Great Musicians Series** give in books of moderate size interesting accounts of all who have distinguished themselves in Art and Music; and the lives of the men and women who have made English Literature one of the glories of the world are described in the two series, **English Men of Letters** and **Great Writers.**

Here in a compendious form will be found an account of their early struggles and difficulties till by the power of genius they won their place in the everlasting temple of Fame.

The story of the **Queens of England** is well told by **Mrs. Strickland** in six interesting volumes, and **Campbell's Lord Chancellors of England** unfolds the life story of the great lawyers who have risen to the highest legal position in the land.

Another series entitled **Eminent Women** gives us an account of the lives of some of the great women who have won a place in history, and another series, **Rulers of India,** sets before us the lives of the great men who have ruled in England's name over that vast possession.

The lives of great scientists, great explorers, great inventors,

great engineers, etc., will be found under their names in the Catalogue, but the books themselves are too numerous to mention. But before leaving Biography altogether I must call attention to two or three famous books which all should read.

Foremost among these is the world-famous **Life of Dr. Johnson, by Boswell.** This is usually regarded as the best biography in existence, and it is indeed a wonderful book. In it the great Doctor is set before us in all his strength and all his weakness. Most other biographies describe the man about whom the author is writing; here in this book we have the very man himself. In it Dr. Johnson more truly lives than in any of his own writings.

Lockhart's Life of Scott is another life-like picture of a great and noble man.

Forster's Life of Dickens is a charming and delightful book, and in it we become acquainted with the most famous and widely read of modern novelists.

The Life of Tennyson, by his Son, gives us an admirable picture of the foremost poet of the nineteenth century; and **Trevelyan's Life of Lord Macaulay** unfolds the story of the great essayist and historian whose famous history I have already recommended you to read.

Adventures, Travels and Voyages will always appeal to a considerable number of readers, and in this connection I would call attention to a series known as **The Adventure Series,** in which books many adventurous episodes in all parts of the world are described in an interesting way.

The writings of the great Missionary and Explorer, David Livingstone, such as **South Africa, by Livingstone, Zambesi etc., by Livingstone,** may be specially recommended as of perennial interest, and these may well be followed by **Stanley's How I Found Livingstone,** in which he describes his journey through South Africa till his efforts were crowned with success by the discovery of the lost explorer.

Very interesting and well worth reading, too, are Stanley's other works, for example, **In Darkest Africa** and **Through the Dark Continent;** while **With Kitchener to Khartoum** and **Capetown to Ladysmith,** both **by Steevens,** are admirable little books.

Central and Eastern Arabia, by Palgrave, is both interesting and valuable, throwing as it does a flood of light on that little known land.

Very famous, too, is **Eothen, by Kinglake,** a story of travel and adventure in the east.

Among other works of travel the reader may be recommended to **Travels in Abyssinia, by Bruce, Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, by Huc,** and **The Travels of Marco Polo.**

The "North Pole" has always possessed a fascination for adventurous minds, and the books recounting the various attempts to reach it are numerous and interesting.

Among these may be specially mentioned **The Arctic Regions, by Franklin, The Voyage of the Fox, by McClintock,** which describes the adventures met with in the search for the heroic John Franklin, **My Arctic Journal, by Peary,** and **Farthest North, by Nansen,** which gives an account of one of the most famous attempts to reach the Pole.

The attempts made so far to reach the South Pole have not been so numerous, but the story of one such attempt has been told in an admirable manner by **Captain R. F. Scott** in his **Voyage of the "Discovery."**

Burnaby's Ride to Khiva was a famous book in its day, and is still worth reading, and so also is **Landor's In the Forbidden Land,** which gives an account of the adventures he met with in his journey to the mysterious land of Tibet.

The Voyage of the Challenger, by Spry, though of course not comparable with the great work on that subject, is interesting as giving a brief account of what was done in that famous expedition.

These are only a few of the books of travel contained in the Birmingham Free Libraries; there are many others, but it is impossible to mention them all. Nor is it claimed that the books mentioned are in all cases the best books on the particular lands they deal with. All that is claimed for them is that they are good books, interesting and valuable, and that those readers who are fond of travel will find something in them to gratify their tastes.

For other books I must recommend them to consult the Catalogue under the name of the Continent or Country in which they are specially interested.

CHAPTER III.

LAW, POLITICAL ECONOMY, EDUCATION.

Passing on to books on Law, Politics, Education and Political Economy, the reader is recommended to take out the volumes

contained in an excellent series entitled **The English Citizen Series.** The volumes are of comparatively small size, but they are written by men of eminence in the various subjects with which they deal, and those who read them with care and intelligence will gain a fuller knowledge of the rights, duties and privileges of citizens than most of us possess. They deal with such subjects as Central Government, Foreign Relations, Land Laws, Local Government, Poor Law, State and Education, State in Relation to Trade, and State and Labour.

Another important series that may be recommended is **The Social Science Series.** These books deal in a comparatively brief form with many of the most pressing questions of the present day, such as: The Conditions of Labour, The Drink Question, Effects of Machinery on Wages, Ethics of Socialism, The Labour Question, Land Nationalisation, Poverty, Perils to British Trade, Work and Wages, and many other subjects of equal importance.

Among larger books on these subjects may be mentioned **Industrial Democracy, by S. and B. Webb, Democracy in America, by De Tocqueville, In Darkest England and the Way Out, by Booth, Chartism, by Carlyle** (a remarkable little book), and **Land Reform, by the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.** This last has the additional interest for Birmingham readers that it is the work of the well-known and popular Member for Bordesley.

Mention should also be made of **John Stuart Mill's** famous **Essay on Liberty,** and his treatise on **Political Economy.**

I would also recommend **Munera Pulveris, by Ruskin, Unto This Last, by Ruskin, Time and Tide, by Ruskin, The Crown of Wild Olive, by Ruskin,** and his wonderful series of letters to the people of England which he called **Fors Clavigera.** All these works of his are extremely interesting and full of valuable suggestions for the better regulation of life and conduct.

Those who are interested in military matters may be recommended to **Mr. Haldane's Army Reform, etc.,** while business men will find **The Empire of Business, by Carnegie,** very attractive.

The Children of the Nation, by Sir J. E. Gorst, is interesting as containing the views of a well-known statesman and former Minister of Education, and **Education, by Spencer,** gives us the views of one of the foremost philosophers of the nineteenth century.

On Compromise, by J. Morley, is characterised by all the force and clearness of that famous writer and statesman.

Practical Housing and **Housing Policy,** both by **Councillor**

J. S. Nettlefold, of Birmingham, deal with one of the most pressing questions of the day, and the same may be said of **Imperialism, by Hobson,** and **The Imperial Fellowship of British Colonies, by Lord Norton.**

Past and Present, by Carlyle, will well repay careful reading, and the same may be said of **John Stuart Mill's Representative Government.**

The Letters of "Junius," so famous in their day, are still worth reading.

F. Harrison's National and Social Problems is an important work, and so also is **Lord Avebury's Municipal and National Trading.**

Readers interested in Socialism will find several books under this heading; among them may be mentioned **English Socialism of To-day, by Forster, Socialism and Society, by J. R. Macdonald,** and **New Worlds for Old, by H. G. Wells.**

Another important work to which attention may be called is **The History of Trade Unionism, by Webb.**

On the important subject of Law, **The Science of Law, by Amos,** and **Ancient Law, by Maine,** may be recommended as interesting and valuable works.

CHAPTER IV.

ARTS, SCIENCES, AND NATURAL HISTORY.

I now come to the great and important class of books on Arts, Sciences and Natural History.

It is more difficult to recommend specific books for reading in the class which contains these subjects than in any other class in the Library.

Especially with regard to the more technical subjects this difficulty is so great that no satisfactory attempt to deal with it can be made in a pamphlet of this nature.

In such subjects as Acoustics, Anthropology, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Electricity, Engineering, Magnetism, Physiology, Steam Engine, Telegraphy, etc., the subject matter is always undergoing change as new discoveries and improvements are made. So much is this the case that the books which were standard books and quite up to date only two or three years ago are, in many

instances, superseded and rendered in some cases misleading, and the books which hold the field to-day will themselves be superseded and rendered, if not useless, yet out of date and to some extent misleading, in a very short time.

One of the greatest problems of a Library is how to keep pace with the constant output of new technical books.

The most satisfactory advice that I can give to readers in reference to such books is that they should select from the Catalogue those which are of recent date. In this way they will be sure of getting up-to-date information, and will not be loading their minds with obsolete theories which they will afterwards have to unlearn.

One illustration will suffice to show what I mean. For many years the Atomic Theory in Chemistry was held to be an absolute truth, and on this basis the science of Chemistry was built up. Atoms, though no one had ever seen one, were presumed to be the ultimate particles of matter, absolutely indestructible and indivisible. It comes as somewhat of a shock to be told that in this sense there are no such things as atoms, that what are known as atoms are not indestructible, and that as a matter of fact they are all the time subject to disintegration and decay.

There are, however, certain books to which the attention of the reader may be called.

For example, there is the **International Scientific Series,** which now extends to 92 volumes. These books are written by the foremost exponents of the Sciences with which they deal, and they range over a very wide field, so that almost every subject of scientific interest finds a place in the series.

As the series is so extensive, some readers may perhaps be deterred by that fact from starting on it. To such readers, if there be any, I would say that the volumes are quite independent of one another, and there is no necessity at all to begin with the first volume of the series and go straight through.

The reader should select from it such books as deal with the subjects in which he is interested. In this way he will be making the best possible use of these books. If incidentally his reading of these chosen volumes should make him desire to read others in the series, it would be an additional good result.

In some of the other subjects in this large class of books, the difficulty of recommending certain books is not quite so great.

In Astronomy, for example, the reader may be recommended

to take **The Story of the Heavens, by Ball,** or **Starland,** by the same author. Indeed, all his books are worth reading and give much valuable information in an interesting way.

The Solar System, and **The Story of the Stars,** both by **Chambers,** are two admirable books, and for quite young readers, **Sun, Moon and Stars, by Giberne,** and **Radiant Suns,** by the same author, will form a good introduction to fuller works on the subject.

Popular Astronomy, by Flammarion, is a very useful work, and made interesting by the imagination of this famous French Astronomer.

A more serious work, but one which should certainly be studied, is **Astronomy, by Herschel,** and the many works on Astronomy by the late **Richard Proctor** are well worth reading. They convey in a very popular form the results of astronomical research which had been attained in his day.

Of more recent books on Astronomy, **Worlds in the Making, by Arrhenius,** is an interesting and valuable work.

Mars and Its Canals, by Lowell, and **Is Mars Habitable? by Wallace,** deal with the fascinating planet which is supposed to be most like the earth on which we dwell.

A very interesting little book is **The Friendly Stars, by Martin,** in which the writer, in a simple and untechnical way, introduces us to the chief stars visible in our latitude.

Side-Lights on Astronomy, by Newcomb, and **The Stars, by Newcomb,** are two important and valuable works by a famous American astronomer; and **The World Machine, by Snyder,** is a book which will repay perusal, and so also will **Dolmage's Astronomy of To-day.**

On the important subject of Art the books are very numerous, and it is difficult to make a selection from them which shall not seem to ignore many other books as valuable as those to which reference is made. To carry out the design of this pamphlet, however, reference must be made to a few, and it is confidently hoped that the careful study of these will lead the reader to the many other works on the subject. As a general rule it may be said that any of the books referred to with approval, in the books to which this pamphlet calls attention, would be valuable helps to readers and enable them to carry on their studies. And now I proceed to mention a few of the books on this most interesting subject.

Among these, probably the first place should be given to the

several works by **John Ruskin** which deal with Art. As the work of a man of genius and a great art critic they are all worth reading, and will be found very suggestive. They are not all, however, equally understandable by beginners in the study of Art, and it may be desirable therefore to mention those which beginners will find little or no difficulty in understanding. With this end in view you cannot do better than begin with **A Joy for Ever.** This book contains the substance of two lectures delivered at Manchester in 1857, the first lecture dealing with the Discovery and Application of Art, and the second with its Accumulation and Distribution.

Another work is **The Two Paths,** also consisting of lectures on Art in its application to Decoration and Manufacture.

The Lectures which he delivered to his students at Oxford entitled **Lectures on Art** and **The Art of England** should also be carefully studied. All these, being delivered originally as lectures, are more general in their treatment, and more easily grasped, than the greater works on Art such as **Modern Painters** and the **Stones of Venice.** Those, however, who have mastered the lectures will pass on to these important books with a certain amount of acquired knowledge which will stand them in good stead.

Chesneau's English School of Painting is an admirable book translated from the French, and enjoys the distinction of being highly praised by Ruskin in his own **Art of England.**

Another book which may also be read with pleasure and profit is **Lectures on Art, by Poynter.** There are many other works on Art in the Catalogue, but these will serve as an introduction to the subject.

In view of the interest which is now being aroused by the aeroplane and its capabilities, the attention of the reader is directed to the following books, in which up-to-date information may be obtained, viz.: **Bacon's By Land and Sky, Chatley's Problem of Flight,** and **Artificial and Natural Flight, by Sir Hiram S. Maxim,** who, as all know, is a great authority on the subject. The literature on this question is not yet extensive, but these books will serve to show how the question stands to-day.

On Architecture the reader is recommended to read **The History of Architecture, by Freeman, The Gothic Revival, by Eastlake, The Christian Revival of Architecture,** and **The Principles of Pointed Architecture,** both **by Pugin,** a great authority on the subject, **The Seven Lamps of Architecture, by Ruskin,** a most interesting work, and **Gothic Architecture, by Scott.** These books

will introduce the reader to the subject and point out to him other books which he may profitably study.

Books on Botany are so numerous, and in nearly all cases so good, that it is difficult to make a satisfactory selection that shall not seem to do injustice to the books not mentioned. In accordance with the plan of this pamphlet, however, the following may be recommended, viz.: **The Story of the Plants, by Allan; The Story of Wild Flowers, by Henslow; Wild Flowers, by Lankester; Elementary Botany, by Oliver; Wayside and Woodland Blossoms, by Step,** and the same author's **Wild Flowers Month by Month; Flowers: Their Origin, Shapes, etc., by Taylor;** and **Plant Life for Young People, by Stopes.**

On the interesting subject of Earthquakes the following books may be mentioned: **Recent Earthquakes, by C. Davison,** of King Edward's School, Birmingham; **The New Seismology, by Dutton.** These books, published in 1905 and 1904 respectively, give quite recent information on the subject.

Other books of interest are **Earthquakes, by Boscowitz; Seismology, by Milne,** whose researches on the subject are so well known; and **Earthquakes, by Zurcher,** and others.

Quite unlike anything else and very interesting in itself is **Darwin's Vegetable Mould and Earthworms.** The work shows, as indeed all Darwin's works do, the results obtained by his careful and painstaking investigations, and those who read it will probably be surprised to find how very useful a part in the preparation of the soil is played by the humble worm.

In Electricity again the books are very numerous, and no wholly satisfactory selection can be made. The reader is invited to consult the Catalogue and begin with the latest books on the subject. The dates appended to the entries will show him which these are.

In writing for Birmingham readers, however, it may not be out of place to call special attention to the following, viz.: **Modern Views of Electricity, Signalling Through Space,** and **Electrons,** all **by Sir Oliver Lodge,** the Principal of the Birmingham University.

In these works we have the views of a most distinguished specialist, one, too, who not only knows his subject thoroughly, but is gifted with the power of lucid expression which enables him to make the difficult questions with which he deals comparatively easy to understand.

Most readers are no doubt familiar with the name Evolution,

but if they wish to know what is implied thereby it will be necessary for them to read the two great books by **Darwin** in which this theory is set forth, viz.: **The Origin of Species**, and **The Descent of Man.** In these works the reader will find clearly described the results of many years' careful investigation of the subject.

Should he by any chance find these too difficult to begin with, he may be recommended to try **Darwiniana, by Huxley**; **Human Origins, by Laing**; and **The Evolution of Matter, Life, and Mind, by Duncan.** Huxley, who became an early convert to Darwinism, set himself in several of his lectures the task of making this difficult subject easy of comprehension, and as he, too, possessed the gift of lucid expression, he accomplished his purpose admirably, so that the reader can understand the theory even if he is not prepared to accept it.

The same may be said to some extent of **Laing's Human Origins.** It is a very interesting work. **The Evolution of Matter, Life, and Mind, by Duncan,** is a quite recent work on the subject, and will well repay perusal.

Other books to which reference may be made are: **The Story of Creation, by Clodd**; **The Genesis of Species, by Mivart**; **Scientific Evidences of Evolution, by Romanes**; and **Last Words on Evolution, by Haeckel.**

In Geology, as in Botany and Electricity, the books are so numerous as to preclude a satisfactory selection; there are, however, one or two names so closely associated with the subject that reference must be made to them.

Among these is **Sir Charles Lyell,** whose **Elementary Geology** is both an interesting and valuable work.

Interesting, too, though now somewhat out of date, are the works on Geology by **Hugh Miller,** especially his **Old Red Sandstone. Lapworth's Text Book of Geology** is interesting both on its own account and also because the author is the Professor of Geology in the Birmingham University; and his **Geology of the Birmingham District** will appeal to all the inhabitants of Birmingham who are anxious to know something of the geological strata on which we live.

Quite recent and important works are **The Romance of Modern Geology, by Grew,** and **The Age of the Earth, by Sollas,** the latter work being by the Professor of Geology at Oxford. Another interesting and useful book is **Geikie's Outlines of Field Geology,** and the same may be said of **Woodward's Geology of England and**

Wales, while **Professor Seeley's Story of the Earth** is a valuable book for the beginner.

There are many other books on this interesting subject, but as it is necessary to confine this pamphlet to a reasonable size, the reader is referred to the Catalogue for them.

Man, as a subject, must always be interesting to men, and there are many books in which the reader will find an account of his origin and development. Among these may be specially mentioned **Primitive Man, by Clodd**, a comparatively brief but interesting work; **Man's Place in Nature, by Huxley**, distinguished by all the clearness and charm which characterise this celebrated Professor's writings; **The Descent of Man, by Darwin**, which has already been referred to under the heading Evolution, must from its importance be again mentioned here.

The Antiquity of Man, by Lyell, is a comprehensive and valuable work. Useful, too, will be found **The Human Species, by Quatrefages**, and **Life in Early Britain, by Dr. Windle**, late Professor at the Birmingham University, is an interesting and useful book.

Other works to which attention may be called are **The Evolution of Man, by Haeckel**, and **The Kingdom of Man, by Lankester.**

The very interesting and important subject of Natural History would almost require a pamphlet to itself to do it adequate justice. This is well shown in the Catalogue by the fact that under this heading only General books on this subject are included, the various divisions of Natural History such as Ants, Bees, Birds, Butterflies, Dogs, Horses, etc., being treated separately.

Even of the general books on Natural History it is impossible to mention more than a few, and it is not claimed that in all cases those mentioned are more valuable than those to which no reference is made. They have been selected more on account of their generally interesting character than for any other reason.

Among such books **Buckland's Curiosities of Natural History** holds a distinguished place. In four volumes the author deals in a graphic and interesting manner with many subjects, and those who care for Natural History at all will find his works well worthy of perusal.

Two very interesting little works by **Anna Buckley** are **Life and Her Children** and **Winners in Life's Race.** These may be specially recommended to younger readers as an introduction to the subject.

Cassell's Natural History in six volumes is an important and useful work, giving a comprehensive view of the whole subject.

A very delightful book is **Darwin's Naturalist's Voyage Round the World,** during which he accumulated much of the information which he made such good use of in his later works.

The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs by the same author is full of interest, giving an account of the gigantic work which is accomplished by the tiny coral insect.

Interesting, too, though somewhat out of date, are the writings of **P. H. Gosse,** who was a famous naturalist in his day.

Another author whose works cannot fail to charm and interest the lover of Natural History is **Richard Jefferies.** All his books are well worth reading, and they are not so lengthy as to render this a difficult task. Those who read his **Amateur Poacher** and **Wild Life in a Southern County** will probably not be satisfied till they have read all his works.

A very interesting little book in its way is **Kingsley's Glaucus, or Wonders of the Shore,** in which the celebrated Canon deals with the remarkable forms of life that may be found there.

There are many other general works on Natural History of which no mention can be made, but no list would be adequate that did not mention the works of **J. G. Wood.** He has written many books on the subject, and the reader can be recommended to them with the full assurance that he will find them interesting and useful.

The books mentioned will suffice as an introduction to the subject, but it is natural to suppose that some of the readers will want to specialise in certain directions; they will want fuller information about some branches of Natural History than general books on the subject contain.

For example, some reader may wish to know something more about Ants, those tiny but very wonderful little people who seem to come so near to the human race in intelligence. It has been said that the brain of the Ant is the most wonderful speck of matter in the Universe.

Sir John Lubbock (now Lord Avebury) made a careful study of these little creatures, and his book **On Ants** contains the result of his investigations. There are two other books in the Catalogue to which the reader may be directed, viz.: **Ants, Bees, Etc., by Bath,** and **Ants and Their Ways, by White.**

On Bees, who are always set before us as models of industry, the following works are recommended: **The Honey Bee, Its**

Natural History, Etc., by Cowan; **Bees, by Sir John Lubbock**; and **The Life of the Bee, by Maeterlinck.** The last is a quite modern work written in a most charming manner.

On the Insect World generally, the denizens of which may be counted by millions, there are several books, any of which will be likely to interest the reader and open his eyes to the wonders of this minute side of life. Among these may be mentioned **Romance of the Insect World, by Badenoch**; **Insect Architecture, by Rennie**; **Pond Life, by Butler**; **Origin of Insects, by Lubbock**; and **The Romance of Insect Life, by Selous.**

Books on Birds are numerous, and the reader who takes any of them cannot go far wrong. The following, however, may be specially mentioned: **Curiosities of Bird Life, by Dixon**; **Open Air Studies in Bird Life, by Dixon**; **Birds of the Countryside, by Finn**; **Summer Migrants, by Hastings**; **British Birds, by Hudson**; **The Book of Birds, by Pycraft**; **Wonders of the Bird World, by Sharp**; and **White's Natural History of Selborne,** one of the famous books of the world which deals largely with birds that came under his own observation. It is a charming book, and should certainly be read by everyone interested in Natural History.

On the important subject of Language, as might be expected, the books are very numerous. Many of them, however, are of a technical character, and intended rather for study than general reading, but there are some which the reader who does not aim to become a student in the full sense of the word will find both interesting and useful.

For example, **The Queen's English, by Dean Alford,** treats in a very pleasant way of our language and the mistakes into which we are apt to fall.

The English Tongue, by Angus, although by no means a recent work, is yet of considerable interest and importance.

The English Language, by Abbott, is well worth reading; so also is **The English Language, by Marsh**; and, perhaps, having read **The Queen's English, by Alford,** the reader ought also to read **The Dean's English, by Moon,** which was written as a criticism of Alford's work.

Another book which should interest Birmingham readers is **The Warwickshire Word Book, by Northall,** which contains many quaint words in use in this district.

The Origin of Language, by Farrar; **The History of the**

English Language, by Low; and **The Life and Growth of Language, by Whitney**, will also be found interesting and instructive.

Good Etymological Dictionaries, too, although not usually regarded as reading books, are yet full of interest to those who like to trace out the origin and family history of the words in common use. For this purpose perhaps the reader will do well to take **Chambers's Etymological Dictionary**, which is really a most valuable work.

There are two other works which are most interesting to read and which throw a great deal of light on the words of the English Language. They are **On the Study of Words** and **English Past and Present**, both the work of **Archbishop Trench.** To say they are as interesting as a novel is perhaps not saying much, as so many novels are not interesting, but to anyone who is at all interested in the change and growth of language these books will be found very fascinating.

On the general subject of Science there are several books to which the attention of the reader may be called and which will form an admirable introduction to the subject. Two such books are **The Fairy Land of Science** and **Through Magic Glasses**, both **by Miss Buckley.**

The New Knowledge, by Duncan, is a quite recent and exceedingly interesting book. Valuable and interesting, too, are the several works of **Professor Huxley**, all of which will repay the reader by their luminous exposition of scientific subjects. Among them may be specially mentioned **Science and Culture, Lay Sermons**, and **Methods and Results.**

The writings of the Astronomer, **Richard Proctor**, may also be commended to the reader as conveying in a simple and interesting way the scientific facts with which he deals. It is true that many discoveries have been made since his day, so that his writings are not up to date, but such books as **The Borderland of Science, Familiar Science**, and **The Mysteries of Time and Space**, are still worth reading, and even where their teaching has been superseded by later knowledge they show the views that were held some thirty or forty years ago, and throw a light on the progress of the human mind.

More modern books are **The Ground Work of Science, by Mivart**, and **The Progress of Science in the Century, by Thomson.**

There are many other subjects in the great class of Arts, Sciences and Natural History to which no reference can be made

in this pamphlet. Enough, however, has been done to show that in this class the reader has a choice of books of most varied interest written by men who are authorities on the subjects with which they deal.

The writer feels that the list of books mentioned is by no means an exhaustive one; he only claims that the books thus selected are in themselves worth reading, and thinks that those who do read them will be led to pursue the subjects with which they deal in other directions.

CHAPTER V.

POETRY AND DRAMA.

Passing on from Science we come next to what by some people is regarded as its very opposite, viz., Poetry and the Drama, and it is quite true that the books in this class and in Fiction also do stand on quite a different footing from the books to which reference has already been made.

In History, Biography, Travel, Arts and Sciences the books deal mainly with facts, and the books are valuable in proportion to the accuracy and clearness with which the facts are stated.

In Poetry, and in Fiction too, although they may be founded on facts, the predominant quality is imagination, and not accuracy of fact. The works are valuable in proportion not to the accuracy of the facts, but to the wealth of imagination with which they are set before the reader.

For instance, it makes no difference to the value of "The Winter's Tale" as a drama, that Shakespeare has therein endowed Bohemia with a seacoast that has no existence in fact.

The two classes of works are sometimes distinguished as Serious and Light Literature, the Serious including all such works as are found in History, Biography, Art, Science, etc., and the Light Literature including Poetry, Drama and Fiction, especially perhaps the latter.

The effect of thus dividing the books into Serious and Light Literature is to place the so-called Light Literature on an altogether lower plane than the Serious.

To my mind this distinction is neither an accurate nor a just one. The two classes of works would be far better described as

"Works of Fact" and "Works of Imagination," and I venture to state that in my opinion the "Works of Imagination" are on a higher plane than the "Works of Fact," however good and useful these latter may be.

At any rate, it is true of poetry that it is the loftiest product of the human mind, and as such claims the attention of all who are interested in the intellectual development of our race.

Poetry stands on a different footing from the classes of books with which this pamphlet has already dealt, because it is impossible to pick out certain subjects.

A good general recommendation to the reader who is interested in Poetry, or anxious to become acquainted with it, would be to read the works of all the well-known poets, and as these, after all, are not very numerous, this would not be so difficult a task as perhaps it seems.

If, however, this seems too comprehensive a direction, the beginner in this subject would do well to take one of the several collections which are to be found in the Library, such as **The Golden Treasury, edited by Palgrave; One Thousand Gems, edited by Mackay; English Lyrics, edited by Baynes; Ancient and Modern Ballads;** or **Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry.** The reader who makes himself familiar with these will become acquainted with some of the choicest Poems in the English language. He will not probably like them all equally well, but he will be able to select those which have pleased and influenced him most, and, as the name of the Poet is given in every case, he will naturally turn to that Poet's complete works in order to find some of the same sort.

Turning to the writings of the Poets themselves, the reader may be recommended to try **Longfellow's Works.** Longfellow, it is perhaps only right to say, is not regarded by the critics as one of the greatest poets. No one, however, can deny that he was widely read, and influenced many people who remained absolutely untouched by the writings of poets who are regarded by critics as far superior to him.

The great object of all poetry, I take it, is first to be read, and then to please and influence those who read. Judged from this standpoint, Longfellow may safely be recommended to those for whom this pamphlet is written. Most of his poems are easy to understand, and they deal with subjects with which all of us are more or less familiar.

The same may be said of the earlier and shorter poems of

Wordsworth, and the reader who reads these in the hope of receiving that pleasure and mental exaltation which it is the mission of poets to give, will not be disappointed. Both in the case of Longfellow and Wordsworth, and in fact in the case of all the poets, the reader is recommended to begin with the shorter poems which do not require a long-sustained mental effort to comprehend them, and to leave the longer works until the mind has become accustomed to the poet's line of thought and method of presentation.

Another poet of whom special mention must be made is **Tennyson**, one of the sweetest singers, and one of the noblest too, in the great roll of England's poets. More popular in his own day, and more widely read than any other English poet, he still retains his place as one of the chief glories of the Victorian Age, and the reader cannot do better than make himself familiar with the works of this great poet.

Having thus started on the poets, the reader will be prepared to pursue his studies in this direction, and what a glorious feast awaits him! **Browning** will sing to him of Men and Women; **Swinburne**, whose recent death we all deplore, will bewitch him with the music of his verse; the martial strains of **Scott** will thrill and inspire him; with **Byron** he will toss upon the mighty ocean and feel the ebb and flow of human passion; **Shelley** with his marvellous lyric fervour will lift his soul on high; **Keats** will unfold to him the inner shrine of beauty; **Moore's** tender and passionate **Irish Melodies** will move him to the very depths of his being; and he will feel the strange charm of **Coleridge**, as shown in **The Ancient Mariner** and **Christabel**.

Then, too, there are the poems of **Burns**, the wonderful peasant poet of Scotland, with their depth of pathos and tender beauty; the writings of the Christian poet, **Cowper**; the beautiful and touching poems of **Goldsmith**; the wondrous word play of **Pope**; the strong and masculine verse of **Dryden**; the magnificent epic poems of **Milton**, the great Puritan, who stands out as one of the great epic poets of the world; the witching beauty of **Spenser's Faerie Queen**; and **Chaucer's** most delightful **Canterbury Tales**, a glorious heritage of song into the possession of which the reader of this pamphlet is invited to enter.

In Drama there are the writings of **Ben Jonson**, of **Beaumont** and **Fletcher**, of **Ford**, **Massinger**, and **Marlowe**, of **Goethe** and **Schiller**, of **Moliere** and **Racine**, of **Knowles** and **Sheridan**, and

beyond all and above all others the wonderful dramas of the immortal **Shakespeare.** To these the reader is recommended to go with the certainty that he will not be disappointed.

CHAPTER VI.

FICTION.

In passing from Poetry to Fiction we are still dealing with works of Imagination, but here the writers are so numerous that it would be impossible to deal even in the briefest manner with them all.

I therefore propose to refer only to those novelists who are no longer living. This will explain why certain great living writers are not mentioned at all; but even this limitation leaves the field too wide, so many great novelists have already passed into the Shadowland that lies beyond this life.

Probably the best way of dealing with the subject will be to confine myself to five or six of the masters of the Art of Fiction, and to try and show from their writings what pleasure and profit we may derive from fiction.

The kind of influence which great fiction is capable of exercising is very beautifully set forth in a little poem, entitled "**Dickens in Camp,**" written **by Bret Harte.** Only a verse or two can be quoted here, but after describing the camp and how the reading began, he goes on:—

And then while round them shadows gathered faster,
    And as the firelight fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
    Had writ of "Little Nell."
The fir trees gathering closer in the shadows,
    Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp with "Nell" on English Meadows
    Wandered and lost their way.
And so in mountain solitudes—o'ertaken
    As by some spell divine—
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
    From out the gusty pine.

The book so feelingly referred to in these verses is **The Old Curiosity Shop, by Dickens,** one of the most popular novels of

that great author. It describes the wanderings through English country places of a little girl with her grandfather, a weak old man whose besetting sin is gambling, and no one who reads the story of her devotion to him and her determination to save him from that evil can fail to be moved thereby.

The book is full of interesting people, among whom may be mentioned Mrs. Jarley, proprietor of the famous Waxwork Show in which one figure did duty for Mary Queen of Scots or for Lord Byron, according to the sympathy of the audience; the gloomy Codlin and the good-tempered Short, joint proprietors of a travelling Punch and Judy Show; the ungainly, awkward, but absolutely trustworthy Kit, the errand boy in Nell's Old Home; Quilp, the horrible little dwarf, who is the main cause of a good deal of the misery in the book; the happy-go-lucky Dick Swiveller; and the poor schoolmaster through whose kindly efforts little Nell and her grandfather find at last a peaceful home, but too late, alas! to save her life. All these and many other characters play their parts in the book, and it may be truthfully said that no one can be the worse, and everyone must be the better, for reading this story of the patience and devotion of a child.

David Copperfield is another work by the same great writer to which attention may be directed. Dickens calls this his favourite child, and it is indeed a great book with its wealth of interesting characters, among whom may be mentioned the very unconventional but kind-hearted Miss Betsy Trotwood; Mr. Murdstone and his sister Jane, a feminine counterpart of himself; Barkis, the stolid carrier, who is, however, the author of the world-famous phrase, "Barkis is willin'"; the devoted Peggotty, afterwards Mrs. Barkis; Agnes Wickfield and the detestable Uriah Heep; the hero of the book, David Copperfield, in whose adventures Dickens revealed a part of his own history; the good-tempered Traddles; and last, but not least, the immortal Wilkins Micawber, always in pecuniary difficulties, and ever waiting with unquenchable hope for something to turn up.

Much might be said in praise of this book, did space permit, but I can only say further that it is full of pathos and humour, and will well repay perusal.

The same may be said of "**Martin Chuzzlewit,**" which deals with the vice of selfishness, and shows clearly the evils which result from yielding to this weakness of human nature. In this book we make acquaintance with that selfish hypocrite, Mr. Pecksniff; with

Sairey Gamp, a type of the nurse of the period, and her shadowy familiar, Mrs. Harris; with Tom Pinch, Mr. Pecksniff's ungainly, awkward, but faithful and great-hearted assistant; and with Mark Tapley, whose ambition it was to be jolly under adverse circumstances.

Another great book of this author's is **Dombey and Son,** which illustrates the evil results which flow from unreasonable pride. Here in this book we meet with a number of interesting people, among whom may be mentioned the famous Cap'en Cuttle, whose iron hook was such a terror to the boys in church, and who was himself the embodiment of a genial generosity; Jack Bunsby, a wooden-headed mariner, to whom Cap'en Cuttle used to appeal in all cases of emergency; Sol Gills, the dreamy instrument seller; Mr. Carker, of the flashing teeth; Susan Nipper, the sharp-tongued but kind-hearted nurse of little Florence Dombey; and the inimitable Mr. Toots, one of the products of Dr. Blimber's forcing school. These and many other characters go to make up a wonderful book.

There are several other novels by Dickens, all of which are interesting, but space prevents a detailed reference to these. I must, however, before passing on to another author, call attention to that absolutely unique book, "**The Pickwick Papers,**" written at the beginning of his career when he was only twenty-four years of age. It is a marvellous production, full of fun, humour and tenderness. There is nothing quite like it in the whole range of our literature, and the reader may be confidently recommended to read this work. In it he will make acquaintance with Mr. Pickwick himself, whose adventures with his three friends, Tracy Tupman, Augustus Snodgrass and Nathaniel Winkle, are so humorously described; with the immortal Sam Weller, one of the never-dying characters of fiction; with Tony Weller, his father, the corpulent coachman with his strong objection to widows; with Mr. Wardle, a fine specimen of an old English country gentleman; with the irrepressible rascal Jingle, and his companion Job Trotter, and with many other life-like characters. It is of this book that Lord Campbell once said that he had much rather have written Pickwick than be Chief Justice of England and a Peer of Parliament.

To find anything approaching the popularity of Dickens we must go back to an earlier generation and turn to the **Waverley Novels** written **by Sir Walter Scott,** the Wizard of the North.

I have already referred to three or four of these works in the chapter on History (see page 9), but all his novels

are admirable and will be found full of interest by those who read them.

Here again it is impossible to mention all his works in detail, but in addition to the historical novels referred to, the reader is recommended to try "**Guy Mannering,**" in which the constant interchange of romance and adventure is sure to be found pleasing, and "**The Antiquary,**" with its picture of the life lived by a Scottish Antiquarian of the old school. In this book, too, will be found Edie Ochiltree, a very admirable portrait of the Scottish Gaberlunzie, or beggar, who had his regular round of places to call at and felt no shame in taking alms.

Another book of his, altogether different in subject from either of the preceding, is **Quentin Durward,** which deals with the adventures of a young Scottish Archer at the Court of Louis XI. of France. In this book we get a good picture of that crafty monarch, and also of his chief opponent, the bold and hot-headed Charles, Duke of Burgundy.

Anne of Geierstein, another of his books, introduces us to the Swiss Mountains and the brave people who inhabit them, and finally describes for us their victory over the forces of the same Duke Charles of Burgundy at the battle in which he fell.

Mention, too, may be made of the novels which deal with Scottish life, such as **The Heart of Midlothian, Old Mortality,** and **The Monastery,** in which the life of the peasantry of Scotland is so admirably portrayed, while the sad story of **The Bride of Lammermoor** will appeal to those who are fond of the pathetic in literature.

Another great novelist who was contemporary with Dickens is **Thackeray.** His books do not deal with quite the same class of people as those of Dickens, and possibly as a consequence they are not so generally popular. They, however, rank in the highest class of fiction, and should be read by those who would like to know to what heights fiction can attain.

Probably his most noted book is **Vanity Fair.** In this book the famous, or infamous, Becky Sharp plays her part, and the many other characters whose life story is inwoven with hers make the book interesting and valuable.

Another book of his, to many people of even greater interest, is **The Newcomes,** which contains a beautiful and touching portrait of Colonel Newcome, one of the finest characters in fiction.

Pendennis and **The Adventures of Philip** will also interest the majority of readers.

Another author whose writings may be cordially recommended to the reader is **Charles Reade.** His distinct purpose in most of his novels is to call attention to some crying evil with the hope of getting it remedied. This is especially shown in his great novel, "**Hard Cash,**" in which a lurid light is thrown on the practices then prevalent in private lunatic asylums. It is a great and powerful book, and contains one of the finest descriptions of a sea fight ever written. No one can read the account of the battle waged by Captain Dodd in his Merchant Vessel against two pirate ships which attacked him, without being thrilled thereby.

Another book of Charles Reade, "**It Is Never Too Late To Mend,**" in the same way illustrates the harshness and even cruelty with which prisoners were sometimes treated. This book has an additional interest for Birmingham readers, because the prison which he describes is generally supposed to be the Gaol at Winson Green.

In another of his books, "**Put Yourself in His Place,**" he deals with the outrages perpetrated at Sheffield in the early days of Trade Unions.

In "**The Cloister and the Hearth**" Reade gives an admirable picture of life in the Middle Ages.

The reader who is interested in the development of a plot will find satisfaction in the novels of **Wilkie Collins.** Among his books may be mentioned "**The Woman in White,**" one of his chief works; "**The Moonstone,**" in which the mystery and intrigue turning on the possession of a sacred gem from India is unravelled; and "**No Name,**" in which a young lady sets herself to gain by stratagem the fortune of which she has been deprived by the action of the law relating to marriage. He has written many other works all more or less interesting.

Among lady novelists the first place perhaps should be given to **Jane Austen,** who was born in 1775 and died in 1817. The daughter of a country clergyman, and brought up in a country parsonage, her novels deal entirely with that particular section of society in which her lot was cast—Clergymen, Country Gentlemen, Naval Officers, Squires and Baronets, together with their families, appear in her pages, and it is practically with their domestic and home life that she is concerned. If you want to know how such people lived and occupied themselves, what they talked about, and

what were their chief interests in life, you cannot do better than read Jane Austen's novels. Her range is limited, but within that range she is unapproachable, and has the power of making the little every-day incidents of commonplace life supremely interesting.

Dying as she did at 42, her books are not numerous, and the reader may be recommended to read them all. Special mention, however, may be made of "**Pride and Prejudice,**" which is usually considered her finest work; "**Mansfield Park**" also occupies a high place among her writings, and the same may be said of "**Emma.**"

Sir Walter Scott, in his diary, says of her: "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements of feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with"; and Lord Macaulay, speaking of her novels, says: "There are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection." Such praise from men so well qualified to judge is the highest testimony to the worth of her novels.

Contemporary with Jane Austen was another famous novelist, **Maria Edgeworth,** whose books, both those written for children and adults, have enjoyed a long and well-deserved popularity. Her novels were highly appreciated by Sir Walter Scott, who declared in the preface to the Collected Novels that her descriptions of Irish character had encouraged him to make a similar experiment upon Scottish character in the "Waverley" Novels.

Scattered through the works of Ruskin are many tributes to her great worth as a novelist, and expressions of his own personal liking for them. He specially mentions "**The Absentee**" and "**Ormond,**" and says that no other books so well illustrate the Irish character and indicate the causes which have led to distress in Ireland as these. They are cordially recommended to the reader, and so also is **Castle Rackrent,** another of her tales, which in a short compass throws a good deal of light on Irish life and character.

Another great woman novelist is **Charlotte Brontë,** the author of that famous work, "**Jane Eyre.**" The reader is recommended to make acquaintance with this celebrated and powerful book.

"**Villette,**" another book by the same author, gives an interesting picture of a young lady's life at a school in Brussels.

While dealing with lady novelists it will be necessary to specially mention one more, viz., Mary Ann Evans, better known as "**George Eliot.**" In her case there is this additional interest

for Midland readers that she was a Warwickshire woman, born in the parish of Colton, not far from Nuneaton.

Her novels are all powerful, but not all equally interesting to the general reader. Probably such a reader will find it best to begin with "**Scenes from Clerical Life,**" which first brought her into notice as a novelist. Among her other books, "**Adam Bede**" may be specially mentioned. In this book we have a picture of the early days of Methodism. Dinah Morris, the woman preacher, is a very well drawn character; so also is Adam Bede himself, but both these for general interest must give place to the keen-witted and sharp-tongued farmer's wife, Mrs. Poyser, who furnishes a good deal of the humour of the book.

Another work of hers is "**Silas Marner,**" which, by many critics, is considered her most perfect work. It tells the story of a poor weaver whose life has been wrecked by a false accusation, and shows how he was compensated for his sufferings by a little waif of a child who wanders in at his open door and is found asleep on his hearth, and whom he brings up as his daughter. The book is full of good things, and will be found very interesting.

Another novelist to whom special attention may be called is **William Black**, any of whose works will well repay perusal. The scope of this pamphlet will not allow mention to be made of all his novels, but "**Kilmeny,**" "**In Silk Attire,**" and "**A Daughter of Heth**" are all interesting and characteristic works, and special attention is called to "**The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton,**" which in some respects is his most charming work, and is really a delightful book.

A totally different writer, but one well worth reading, too, is **Captain Marryat**, whose nautical novels give us such a good picture of sea-faring life before the advent of steam.

Among these may be mentioned "**Peter Simple,**" which is the story of a little midshipman who afterwards became a lord, and is full of fun and adventure, **Mr. Midshipman Easy**, and "**The King's Own.**"

Captain Marryat did not confine himself entirely to sea-faring works, but wrote certain other novels, of which "**Japhet in Search of a Father**" and "**The Poacher**" are favourable and interesting examples.

Mention may be made, too, of **Anthony Trollope**, who began his career as a novelist by producing one or two Irish novels of

considerable merit, which, however, were not at the time so successful as they deserved to be.

A few years later he began the series of **Barsetshire Novels,** which immediately achieved success. These novels deal with Cathedral Society and clerical life, which they portray with a good deal of quiet humour that makes them delightful. Among these novels may be mentioned "**The Warden,**" "**Barchester Towers,**" and "**The Last Chronicle of Barset.**"

Not content with depicting the life of the clergy, he turned his attention to political novels, among which are "**Phineas Finn, the Irish Member,**" "**Phineas Redux,**" and "**The Prime Minister,**" all decidedly interesting and giving a fairly good picture of political life in the Mid-Victorian Period.

And now as much space has been given to fiction as the scope of this pamphlet permits, and I can only mention hurriedly the names of a few more of the many authors who have chosen fiction as their means of expression.

Among these may be named **R. D. Blackmore,** whose most famous novel, "**Lorna Doone,**" has been so widely read; **Besant and Rice,** joint authors of that humorous and yet in some respects pathetic book, "**The Golden Butterfly,**" and many other popular novels; **Walter Besant,** who, while his fellow worker, James Rice, was lying ill, wrote "**All Sorts and Conditions of Men,**" a book not only interesting as a story, but also from the fact that it gave rise to the People's Palace in the east end of London; **George Macdonald,** the great Scottish novelist and poet, whose writings are illuminated with genius, and show a deep insight into the Scottish national character; **Lord Lytton,** whose "**Last Days of Pompeii**" gives us a good insight into the life of a provincial Roman city, and describes the destruction brought on that city by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius; **B. Disraeli,** author of several political novels famous in their day; **Charles Lever,** famous for his Irish novels full of rollicking fun and good humour; **Charles Kingsley,** known as Parson Lot, who gave us "**Alton Locke**"; **W. H. G. Kingston,** author of many nautical tales, very popular in their day; **Mrs. Oliphant,** author of "**Salem Chapel,**" and many other works; **Miss Muloch,** whose famous story, "**John Halifax,**" aroused so much interest when it first appeared; and **Charlotte Yonge,** author of "**The Daisy Chain,**" "**The Heir of Redclyffe,**" and other works of a similar character.

There are many others, but for these the reader is invited to consult the Catalogue itself.

CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS LITERATURE.

From Fiction let us pass on to the books which are grouped in the Catalogue under the head of Miscellaneous Literature. In this class, which, as its name implies, is very general in its character, there are some books which are among the most famous in our literature.

Such a book is **"Sartor Resartus," by Thomas Carlyle.** "Sartor Resartus" is written in Carlyle's most peculiar style, which may perhaps repel the reader at first. If, however, he will consent to believe that it is a great book and worth some trouble to understand, he will gradually become accustomed to the style, and will probably at least find it peculiarly attractive instead of repellant. It deals with "The Philosophy of Clothes," and is an attempt to strip from man the conventionalisms in which he is tied up as in a garment, and set before us what man really is. Although written in prose, it is full of a strange sort of poetry, and teems with lofty and noble thought beautifully expressed. In this book we have in germ Carlyle's whole philosophy, viz., the dignity and importance of good work.

Another exquisite little book is **"Sesame and Lilies," by John Ruskin.** This book consists of three lectures in which Ruskin discusses the question "How and What to Read," together with the further question "Why to Read."

Those who master this little book will not only be charmed with it as a piece of delightful reading, but will also obtain a deeper knowledge of the subject with which it deals than they are likely to get in almost any other way.

Another book which may be confidently recommended is **Lamb's "Essays of Elia,"** written in a most delightful style. These essays are full of a genial wisdom and pathos which make them specially interesting to the reader.

Nor must I omit to mention him who has been called "The Prince of Essayists," viz., **Lord Bacon,** whose essays are models of wisdom and culture. Much pleasure and instruction, too, will

be found in a careful study of the **Essays of Lord Macaulay.** These essays are written with all the charm which distinguished that great writer, and the subjects, being very diverse, afford a choice for all readers. The **Essays on Milton and Warren Hastings** are specially famous.

"**The Roman and the Teuton,**" **by Charles Kingsley,** is another book of considerable interest and well worth reading; and so also is "**The Curiosities of Literature,**" **by Isaac Disraeli,** father of the statesman now known to history as Lord Beaconsfield.

A very interesting book in its way is **Cobbett's** "**Advice to Young Men.**" Written in his own very clear style and drawn largely from his own experience, Cobbett in this little book gives much sound advice to those for whom he is writing.

Another book which will interest many readers is "**The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table,**" **by Oliver Wendell Holmes,** a famous American writer, in which the author in a pleasant and chatty way discusses many subjects of interest.

Reference must also be made to another still more famous American, viz., **R. W. Emerson,** whose works are both stimulating and interesting. His "**Representative Men,**" in which he discusses the uses of great men and deals with Plato, Shakespeare, Napoleon and others, may be specially recommended.

Another English writer of distinguished ability is **De Quincey,** whose works are well worth reading, his best known work being "**The Confessions of an Opium Eater.**"

Other books in this class to which attention may be directed with certainty that those who read them will find them both interesting and valuable are: **Matthew Arnold's Essays, Carlyle's Miscellaneous Essays, Colton's** "**Many Things in a Few Words,**" "**Short Studies on Great Subjects**" **by J. A. Froude, Montaigne's Essays,** "**Utopia**" **by Sir Thomas More, Hamerton's** "**Intellectual Life,**" "**English Humourists**" **and** "**Round-about-Papers**" both **by Thackeray,** and **George Dawson's** "**Shakespeare and other Lectures.**" This last book will be specially interesting to Birmingham readers from the fact that Dawson was so long associated with the intellectual life of the city.

Many other books might be mentioned did space permit, but enough has been said to show that in the class called Miscellaneous are to be found many of the treasures of our Literature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

I have purposely left till last the books which appear in the beginning of our Catalogue under the heading of Theology, and in dealing with these I do not propose to do more than mention the names of some of the chief writers on this subject.

Here the reader may find the writings of great Churchmen such as **Bishop Butler**, whose "**Analogy of Religion**" has been a standard work for more than two centuries; **Paley**, whose "**Evidence of Christianity**" has been famous for about the same length of time; **R. Baxter**, author of that well-known book, "**The Saint's Everlasting Rest**"; **Jeremy Taylor**, author of "**Holy Living and Dying**"; **Dean Alford, Dean Stanley, Dean Farrar**, whose "**Eternal Hope**" created such a sensation when first published; **Canon Liddon**, the famous preacher at St. Paul's Cathedral; **F. D. Maurice, F. W. Robertson**, whose sermons at Brighton obtained such a wide popularity; **Canon Kingsley, Archbishop Trench**, whose "**Notes on the Miracles**" and "**Notes on the Parables**" are so well known; **J. C. Miller**, the former Rector of St. Martin's, the Birmingham Mother Church; **Bishop Westcott**, and many others of great note in their day.

Here, too, are the writings of the great Dissenters such as **J. Martineau**, the famous Unitarian Minister; **H. Bonar**, author of "**God's Way of Holiness**"; **Dr. Dale**, the eloquent and powerful pastor of Carr's Lane for so long a period, whose influence was so deeply felt both in the religious and political life of Birmingham; **George Dawson**, the famous lecturer and preacher of Birmingham, who stood outside the existing denominations of the time; **Dr. Guthrie**, whose "**Gospel in Ezekiel**" was so famous in its day; **John Angell James**, Dr. Dale's predecessor at Carr's Lane; **Alexander Maclaren**, of Manchester; **Mark Guy Pearse**, a celebrated Wesleyan; **Dr. Parker**, of the City Temple, whose "**Ecce Deus**" was intended as a counterblast to the still more famous "**Ecce Homo**" of **Professor J. R. Seeley**, a book which created a great sensation when first issued anonymously in 1865; **Charles Spurgeon**, one of the most famous preachers of all ages; **John Wesley**, who did so much to evangelise England; **Emanuel**

Swedenborg, the Mystic, and founder of the Sect which bears his name; and many other writers of influence and importance.

Here, too, the reader may find the works of **Cardinal Newman,** so long associated with the Oratory in Hagley Road, whose "**Apology for His Life**" is full of interest for all thoughtful readers.

To show the Catholic nature of the selection which has been made for this class, it will be enough to say that here, too, may be found the famous "**Essays and Reviews**" which stirred the religious world so deeply on its first appearance; the scarcely less famous "**Lux Mundi,**" with which the present Bishop of Birmingham was so closely associated; **Paine's** "**Age of Reason**"; **Renan's** "**Vie de Jesus**"; **Strauss's** "**Old Faith and the New**"; the writings of **Charles Voysey**; "**My Religion**" and "**What I Believe,**" **by Tolstoi**; "**Man and His Bodies,**" **by A. Besant**; and "**Zion's Works,**" **or** "**New Light on the Bible,**" in several volumes. Here also may be found "**The Koran**" and "**The Douay Bible.**"

From this brief summary it may be seen that, whatever view the reader takes, he will probably find something to suit him in the books provided.

With regard to Ecclesiastical History and Philosophy, which appear in the same class, it will probably be sufficient to refer readers to the Catalogue itself, as it may be reasonably assumed that those who are likely to study these subjects do not stand in need of the help which this little pamphlet is intended to give.

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